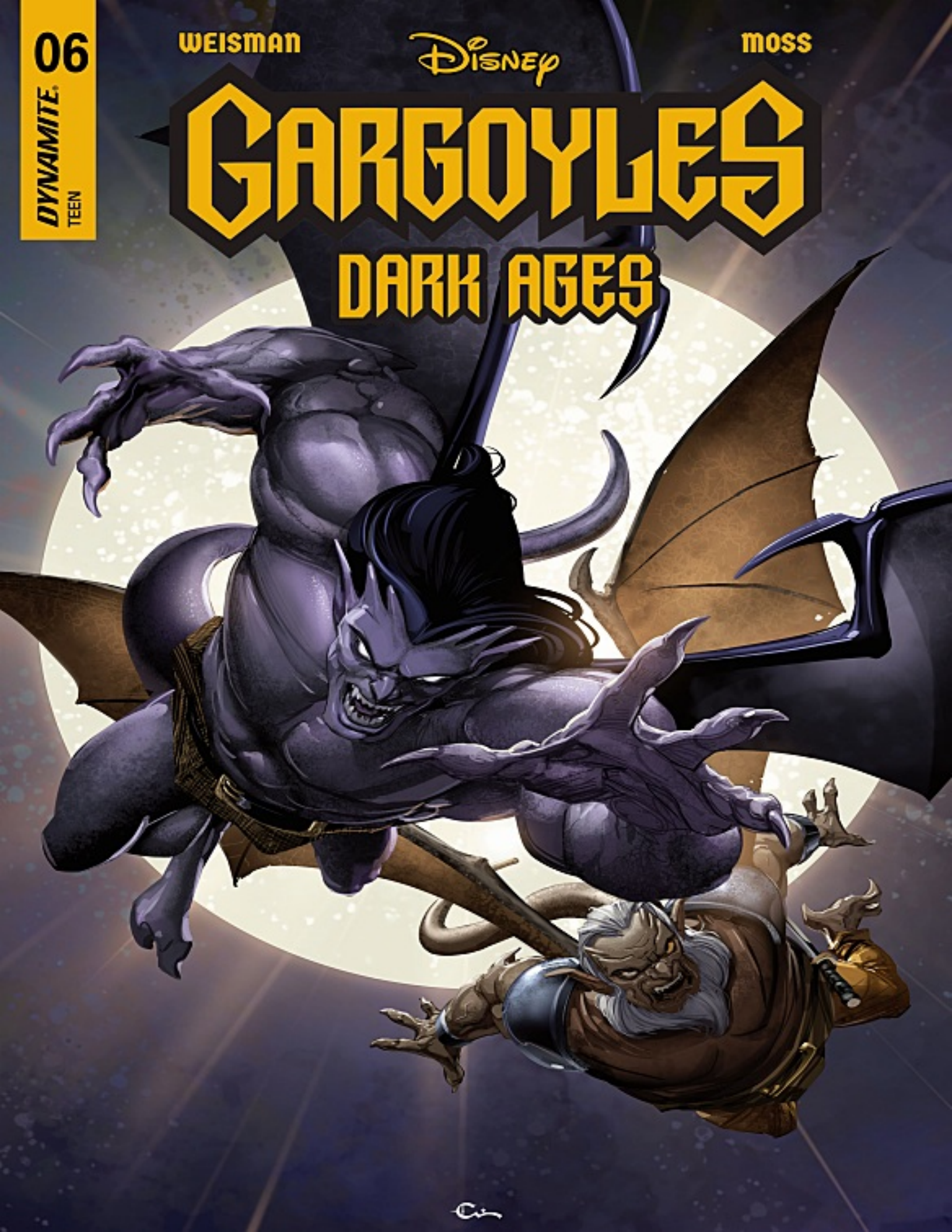
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Disney
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GARGOYLES
DARK AGES

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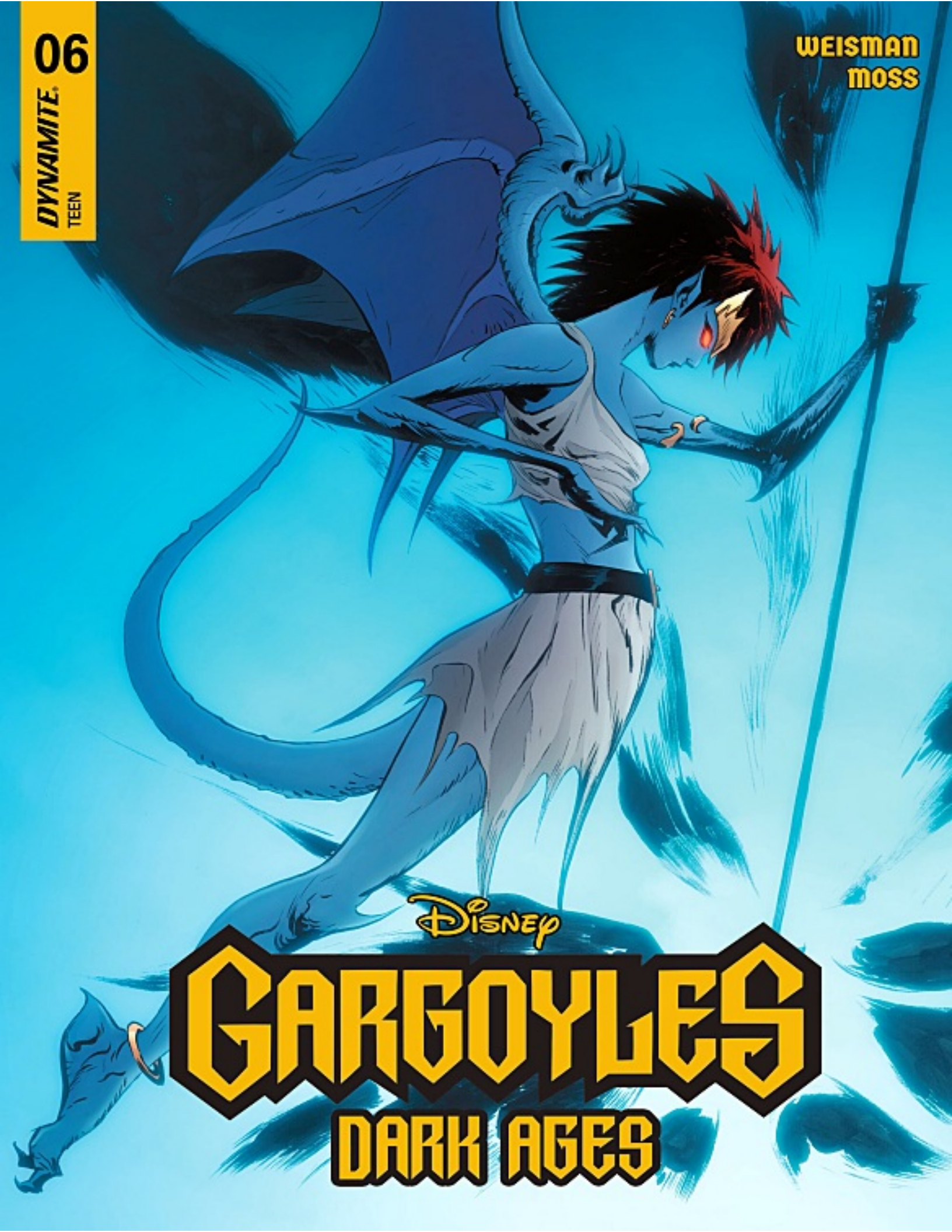
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A treasure has been taken...

Special Thanks to Kevin Pearl, Eugene Paraszczuk, Samantha Keane, Behnoosh Khalili, Julie Dorris, Kendall Tamer, Cristina Casas, Jeff Clark, Jeff Thomas, Scott Tilley

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CAN THIS BE REAL?
CHILDREN, GET READY TO RUN...
NOCK ARROWS, MEN!!
THIS... THIS IS WHAT I SENSED...
TAKE TO THE SKIES!
SURE AS WE BREATHE THE AIR, WE MUST PROTECT THE CASTLE--
--AND EVERYONE UPON THIS HILL!

HOLD, GREAT DRAGON! WHAT BUSINESS HAVE YOU HERE?!
YOUR BUSINESS, APPARENTLY, COUSIN!!
AND YOU'LL BE WANTING TO GET OUT OF THE WYVERN'S WAY!!

GARGOYLES
DARK AGES

ALLIANCE
Chapter Six: The Pledge

Greg Weisman *Writer*
Drew Moss *Artist*
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Jeff Eckleberry *Letterer*
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Nathan Cosby *Packager/Editor*

IF YOU SEEK TO HARM THE HUMANS BELOW, DRAGON, I NAE CAN ALLOW IT!
IF YOU SEEK TO DEFEND THE HUMANS BELOW, THEN YOU'RE A FOOL, COUSIN!
HOLD, NOW, MEN! WAIT FOR MY SIGNAL!
PRINCE MALCOLM...
HAVE YOU SEEN MY DAUGHTER?!

"HAVE YOU SEEN ALESAND?!"
ANTIOPE, DO YOU HEAR THAT? SOMETHING'S COMING!
I HEAR IT...
...BUT I SWEAR I'LL LET NO HARM COME TO, FRIEND ALESAND!
IT'S JUST US!
SHWOOF! I WAS AFRAID THE DRAGON GOT YOU THREE!
IT'S WORSE THAN THAT...
WE THINK HE'S HEADED FOR THE CASTLE!
BUT MY FATHER'S AT THE CASTLE! WE NEED TO WARN HIM! WARN EVERYONE!
DON'T KNOW HOW WE'LL ARRIVE IN TIME...BUT WE CAN TRY!

...THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN OUR KINDS IS WORKING!
AND THERE'S NO WISDOM IN TRYING TO KEEP THE HUMANS AT A DISTANCE...
...FOR WE HAVE ERE LEARNED THAT HUMAN PROBLEMS SOON BECOME GARGOYLE PROBLEMS!
HUMAN PROBLEMS DO NOT BECOME STONE-FLESH PROBLEMS...
...FOR HUMANS ARE THE PROBLEM!!
BEST TO END THIS "ALLIANCE" NOW...
WHOOSSH

LOOK OUT!!
DOWN!
RUN!!
OUT OF MY WAY!
MALVOLIO! BENVOLIO!
GRRRR
RAWRR
DON'T JUST STAND THERE! WE HAVE TO GET THESE CHILDREN TO SAFETY!
REGROUP MEN, HERE! MOVE!
ARCH-MAGE, DO SOMETHING!
I NEED TO WAIT FOR MY MOMENT, PRINCE. I'LL LIKELY GET BUT ONE CHANCE...
IS THAT STRATEGY TALKING--OR SELF-PRESERVATION?
HONESTLY? BOTH.

OH, NO... WE ARE TOO LATE...
WE HAVE TO HELP THEM!
AGREED! HOW?
NOW, MY WARRIORS!!
RAAWK

COUSINS, I HAVE BEEN *RELUCTANT* TO CAUSE YOUR CLAN HARM...
...BUT I AM *SWIFTLY* LOSING MY *PATIENCE*.

NOW, MEN! FIRE!!
FWIP
FWIP
FWIP
FWIP
FWIP
ROB, OUR ARROWS HAVE LITTLE EFFECT AGAINST THE BEAST...
...SO DROP YOUR BOWS AND FETCH WATER TO PUT OUT THE BLAZE!
YOU SEE THAT, COUSINS!
BE THESE THE 'FIERCE WARRIORS' TO WHOM YOU'VE PLEDGED YOUR FEALTY?!
FULMINOUS...

...VENITE!!
KRAKOOM
ARRRGGHH
ENOUGH!

FWOOOSH
LOOK OUT, MAN!
THANK YOU, MY PRINCE. I OWE YOU MY LIFE...
I PERFORMED MY *DUTY* TO A LOYAL SUBJECT. NEVER THINK ON IT.

FROM EITHER SIDE, BROTHER!
AYE, SISTER!
RHAHR
WHAM
CLAWS IN!!
YSSSSSSS

RHRR
SLAM
CLAWS IN?!
KRAK
WHUMP
COUSINS... I THINK YOU BROKE A TOOTH, WHICH WILL TAKE DECADES TO REPAIR.
YOU SHOULD LIVE SO LONG.

I DON'T SEE IT. BUT WE KNOW THE DRAGON STOLE IT!
IT MUST BE HERE... IT MUST BE!
WAIT...
I'VE FOUND IT...
I'VE FOUND EXCALIBUR!

EXCELLENT, MY LOVE! EXCELLENT!
BUT NOW, WE MUST FLEE THIS CURSED PLACE.
CARBONEK, OPEN YOUR GATES...
WHAT OF SHAHRIZAD?
SHE'LL FIND HER WAY BACK...
...BUT WE CANNOT DELAY. WE CANNOT RISK THE DRAGON RECOVERING THE SWORD.

A TREASURE HAS BEEN TAKEN!!
HUMANS HAVE STOLEN FROM MY HOARD!!
RHYDDERCH, CURSE YOU AND YOUR CLAN FOR DISTRACTING ME!
KEEP YOUR PLEDGE WITH THE HUMANS...
...TIME WILL REVEAL THE GREAT BENEFIT IT BRINGS YOU!

MY ANGEL--
WHERE WERE YOU?!
IS EVERYONE ALL RIGHT?!
WE, UH, SAW THE DRAGON, AND...
I BELIEVE ALL HAVE SURVIVED UNHARMED, HUMANS AND GARGOYLES ALIKE.
BUT WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
UM, WELL, YOU KNOW...
EXPLORING!
YEAH, EXPLORING!
THERE YOU ARE!
CHILD, YOU HAD ME SO WORRIED!
I'M FINE, DA!
MAYBE SO, BUT...
...WELL...I SUPPOSE... I'M GLAD YOU'VE MADE NEW FRIENDS.

WE GOT OFF *EASY*, YOU KNOW.
I AM AWARE. AND *GRATEFUL*, *MENTOR*.
VERY GRATEFUL TO *YOU* AND *YOURS*...
...AND IF NOTHING ELSE, MY *FRIEND*, THIS NIGHT HAS *PROVEN* OUR *ALLIANCE* SOUND!
AYE. THAT'S A *VERITY*. MY *FRIEND*.

WE HAVE TO HURRY! I DON'T WANT TO MISS IT!!
WE'RE NOT GOING TO MISS IT!!

THE STORY IS *TOLD*... THOUGH WHO CAN SAY IF IT BE *TRUE*...
Never the end...

THE TALE OF THE THREE BROTHERS

PART THE SIXTH

There was no performance on the sixth night, because, well… DRAGON!

I could – probably will – write about our encounter with Wyvern some other time, but for now, I think we'll carry forward to the final installment of the Lady's story. I remember that in all the excitement (again, DRAGON), Antiope and I nearly missed the beginning of her tale, but we ran up and found our seats by the fire, just as she said…

The Story is told – though who can say if it be true – of Three Brothers, who were destined to save their land from tyranny – to save it, and lose it, and save it again.

"Duff is still with us, will always be with us," said Kenneth. Malcolm nodded. The young former prince had been thinking a lot about birth and death, since the family had come to England four years previous. Since his mother had passed. Malcolm missed her. Missed his eldest brother Duff, as well.

I couldn't stop myself from glancing up at the Prince here. He seemed to be looking at something across the firepit. Something very far away…

And yet life had gone on. Down in the courtyard, Malcolm's nephews played with wooden swords and much gusto. The year was Nine-Hundred and Seventy-One of the Common Calendar.

Which meant this story was not some ancient tale of the past. It was recent – very recent – news…

Lieutenant Robert had crossed enemy lines once again, bringing news from home. And the news wasn't good. King Culen finally had an heir. Until now there had been hope. Culen was forty-nine and had had no sons. That had left Scotland unsettled. That had left open the possibility that Kenneth and the others would be called upon to secure the throne. But Culen's queen had just given birth to Prince Constantine. The succession was now secure. The unrest would soon fade. Unless…

Kenneth had a decision to make.

He and Malcolm had climbed the battlements of Northumberland Keep. But neither had spoken since Kenneth raised the spectre of their late brother. Still, Malcolm knew what Kenneth was thinking. Duff had been the king. Kenneth was always just the strong right arm. Now Kenneth was thirty-nine-years-old.

Was he prepared to fight a battle over a crown he had never truly wanted?

Malcolm waited in silence for a long time, but Kenneth didn't elaborate. Finally, Malcolm spoke: *"I'm seventeen now, Kenneth. I'm not a child that needs protecting. If you will take up Duff's crown, I will take up your sword. And together we can secure our land for those boys down there."*

Kenneth's head turned slowly. He looked at his brother, and then down at the wee warriors below. His own son Maol Chalvim was a nine-year-old tyrant, lording his size over Duff's orphaned four-year-old boy. Not that little Kenneth was complaining, mind you. Both were clearly having a grand time playing at arms here in England. But a real taking up of arms in Scotland would be an entirely different matter.

"Look at them, Kenneth," Malcolm continued, "If we raise them to be good Thanes, then someday their honor will demand they recover what their fathers and uncles have lost. It doesn't end with you and me. So, your choice is clear. Do we leave this struggle for Maol and Kenny and this new Constantine to fight? Or do you and I take the battle to Culen now?"

Kenneth turned back to his brother."Duff will always be with us," *he repeated, "leading us to victory."* And the brothers grasped each other's forearms – firmly and with newfound resolve.

Preparations were begun. Allies were secured. But Kenneth had been through this sort of thing before. Three times before. He knew the Thanes were fickle. They liked to pick a winner, even if that meant changing horses mid- stream. Kenneth needed allies he could count on. Powerful allies.

And so it came to pass that Robbie was once again slipping past the Scots border guard and riding North-by-Northwest. This time, however, Malcolm had come along for the ride… and the mission.

Malcolm and Robbie approached Wyvern Hill alone. The sun was still out, and they knew they could walk among the frozen sentinels unmolested, be among the creatures already when they awakened. But that was no way to begin an alliance. They waited a good mile from the cliffside. The sun sank. Even at this distance they could hear the cracking of stone and the roars. Malcolm shivered involuntarily. He'd seen Gargoyles before. But at a distance. And he'd never had to ask one for a favor before.

"Dismount," Robbie said. And they did.

"Leave the horses," Robbie said. And they did.

"And whatever you do, keep your hands in plain view and off your sword," Robbie said. And Malcolm repeated that advice to himself over and over in his head.

Once again, I looked over to the Prince and my father. Once again, I saw them stare at each other and then at the Lady – astounded by her knowledge of their truths.

And, so, the two friends climbed up the steep grade, taking pains to keep their hands in plain view.

Suddenly, a sentry swooped down upon them. A huge, winged demon with shock-white hair and two great devil horns rising from his brow. The creature spoke – *"Hold, Humans."* – and Malcolm's terror faded: the voice was a low earth-shaking rumble, but the cadence betrayed excitement and inexperience. This gargoyle was young, perhaps no older than Malcolm himself.

I heard a dark rumble behind me and saw one of the Gargoyle Warriors scowling at this description of what could only be himself. He growled – but a female Warrior turned his chin to face her smile, and his scowl relented.

Robbie responded quickly: *"We've come to see your leader. He and I have met before."*

"I remember you…" The Gargoyle's tone made it clear that he remembered Robbie and only Robbie. Malcolm was still a stranger.

"He's my friend," Robbie stated. "My greatest friend. I would lay down my life for him."

The Gargoyle seemed impressed with this. Frankly, so was Malcolm. Not that Robbie's statement was a revelation. But to hear it out loud like that. Malcolm suddenly felt awed by his companion's loyalty.

The Gargoyle rumbled in his chest and then crouched, saying, *"Follow me."* He then raced off on all fours. After but a moment's hesitation – and one exchange of glances – Robbie and Malcolm took off after him, ultimately passing through a gauntlet of Gargoyles 'til they'd climbed their way up… to the Gargoyles' roost – and to their white-haired Rhydderch…

Once again, the Lady stopped. And once again, though I suppose I should have known better, I protested. "Won't you finish?" I pleaded.

"There are others here around this fire, who could, perhaps, better advance the tale now," she responded.

"But you never finish a story," I lamented. "You never reach the end…"

Gently, kindly, she took my face between her soft hands and whispered, *"Don't you know by now, child, that no good story ever truly ends…"*

COVER GALLERY

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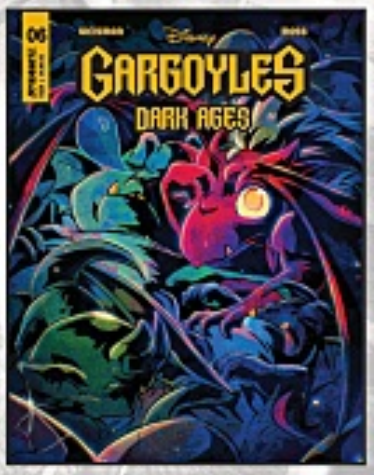
CLAYTON CRAIN

COVER B
Art by
ALAN QUAH

COVER C
Art by
JAE LEE



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COVER F
ACTION FIGURE ART
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COVER G
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